

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SAIGON 05071 280815 Z

16

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 EUR-25 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02

INR-09 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14

USIA-12 DPW-01 IO-12 OMB-01 EB-11 TRSE-00 AID-20

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FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9256

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FOLLOWING RECEIVED FROM AMCONSUL CAN THO ON 27 MAR 1973, BEING
REPEATED FOR YOUR ACTION.

QUOTE

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E. O. 11652: N/ A

TAGS: EAGR, EGEN, PINT, VS

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT THIEU CAMPAIGNS ON FARMERS DAY

1. SUMMARY: PRESIDENT THIEU YESTERDAY PROMISED A SWEEPING
ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM THAT WOULD SIMPLIFY THE GOVERNMENT, RID IT OF
CORRUPTION AND OFFER GREATER LOCAL AUTONOMY. HE PLEDGED TO TAKE
PERSONAL LEADERSHIP OF THE REFORM PROGRAM. HE ALSO OUTLINED HIS
GOVERNMENT' S FIVE YEAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN. THE ABSENCE OF
ANTI- COMMUNIST POLEMICS WAS STRIKING. END SUMMARY.

2. THE PRESIDENT, ACCOMPANIED BY HIS WIFE, PRIME MINISTER KHIEM,
OTHER CABINET MINISTERS, LEGISLATIVE LEADERS, AND THE DIPLOMATIC

CORPS, ARRIVED IN CAN THO YESTERDAY MORNING TO COMMEMORATE THE
THIRD

ANNIVERSARY OF THE PROMULGATION OF THE LAND TO THE TILLER LAW.
SCHOOL CHILDREN LINED THE STREETS ALONG THE ROUTE INTO TOWN AND
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PAGE 02 SAIGON 05071 280815 Z

A CROWD OF ABOUT 60,000 PEOPLE, INCLUDING REPRESENTATIVES FROM EVERY PROVINCE IN THE COUNTRY, GATHERED AT THE REVIEWING STAND.

3. SPEAKING BEFORE THE FARMERS DAY THRONG, THIEU SAID THAT 70 PERCENT OF THE GOVERNMENT'S BUSINESS SHOULD BE DECIDED AT VILLAGE LEVEL, 20 PERCENT AT THE PROVINCES, AND ONLY 10 PER CENT IN SAIGON. TOWARD THE END, HE ANNOUNCED THAT HE WOULD BE REASSIGNING ABOUT A THIRD OF SAIGON'S BUREAUCRATS INTO THE COUNTRY-SIDE, TO IMPROVE AND CLEANSE LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

4. THE PRESIDENT NOTED THAT THE GVN HAD ACHIEVED ITS THREE-YEAR GOAL OF DISTRIBUTION TITLES FOR MORE THAN A MILLION HECTARES OF THE LAND TO 800,000 FARMER FAMILIES. HE CALLED THE LAND TO THE TILLER LAW A "RURAL REVOLUTION" WHICH HAD BEEN ACCOMPLISHED WITHOUT THE BLOODSHED CHARACTERIZED BY THE COMMUNIST REVOLUTION.

5. IN A SPEECH THAT GENERALLY ESCHEWED ANTI-COMMUNIST POLEMICS, THIEU RESOLVED TO EMBARK ON A NEW FIVE-YEAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM EMPHASIZING THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR. THE PROGRAM INCLUDES THE CLEARING OF 1,000,000 HECTARES OF ABANDONED AND PREVIOUSLY NON-ARABLE LAND FOR CULTIVATION BY DEMOBILIZED SOLDIERS AND OTHERS WHO HAVE NOT YET BENEFITTED FROM LAND TO THE TILLER. THIEU ALSO PROPOSED EXTENSION OF THE DELTA'S CANAL NETWORK, AS WELL AS ASSISTANCE TO FISHERY, FORESTRY, AND AGRI-BUSINESS PROJECTS. AGRI-BUSINESS WOULD BE EXPORT ORIENTED TO HELP VIETNAM COVER ITS TRADE GAP. THESE PLANS, HE SAID, WOULD REQUIRE SUPPORT FROM FRIENDLY GOVERNMENTS AND PRIVATE FOREIGN INVESTORS.

6. THIEU RELISHED THE ROLE OF POLITICAL CAMPAIGNER AND DEMONSTRATED THAT HE IS EFFECTIVE ON THE STUMP. HE DELIVERED HIS SPEECH IN FORCEFUL, SOMETIMES QUAVERING TONES, PUNCTUATED BY EMPHATIC

GESTICULATIONS. ALTHOUGH HE WAS NOT OBSERVED KISSING BABIES, THIEU GREETED CROWDS ENTHUSIASTICALLY, PUMPING HANDS AND CHATTING WITH CITIZENS. LATER, AT THE ELABORATE AGRICULTURE FAIR GROUNDS WHICH HAD BEEN ERECTED, THIEU SPENT MORE THAN TWO HOURS, VISITING EACH EXHIBIT, OFTEN INQUIRING AT LENGTH ABOUT FARM PRODUCTS. HE WAS MOST INTRIGUED BY THE FARM MACHINERY, ESPECIALLY A RICE THRESHER PRODUCED BY A PHONG DINH FARMER. THIEU PROUDLY POINTED VISITORS TOWARD THIS EXAMPLE OF VIETNAMESE INGENUITY. BEFORE LEAVING THE FAIR, THIEU RODE A RACING BICYCLE FOR SEVERAL HUNDRED METERS TO THE CONSIDERABLE ANGUISH

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PAGE 03 SAIGON 05071 280815 Z

OF HIS SECURITY GUARDS AND DELIGHT OF THE MASSED ONLOOKERS.
HE THEN RAISED FLAGS TO START A BIKE RACE TO SOC TRANG AND RUNNING
AND WALKING RACES LOCALLY.

7. THROUGHOUT THE DAY, THE SECURITY DETAIL PROTECTING THIEU
SEEMED REMARKABLY UNOBRUSIVE. IN HIS LONG TOUR OF THE FAIR, HE
WAS TRAILED BY SEVERAL AIDES, BUT ALWAYS HAD EASY ACCESS TO
THE CITIZENRY. EARLIER IN THE MORNING, HE HAD STOOD WAVING
IN A JEEP WHICH CREEPED THROUGH A MOB OF CHANTING, FLAG- WAVING
FARMERS ON HOA BINH BOULEVARD. A DISPLAY OF BRILLIANT FIREWORKS
CAPPED THE EVENING' S ACTIVITIES. IT WAS THE FIRST TIME CAN THO
HAD SEEN FIREWORKS SINCE TET 1968.

WISNER
UNQUOTE
BUNKER

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